



(Photo by Pfc. Ben Fox, 3-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

A trail of Iraqi school children

During a patrol a group of school children follow Pvt. Brad Griffith with 1-12 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, down the street, as he talks to his convoy commander over the radio in Judidah, Iraq, May 10. (See story page 3)

Iraqi Army receives M-16 and M-4

By Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Conner
15th Sust. Bde. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - At the start of May, Iraqi Army recruits at the Regional Training Center here began receiving new M-16 and M-4 rifles.

The Iraqi government made the decision to crossover from standard AK-47 assault rifles to the American rifles as part of the reshaping of their military and security forces.

Under the program, Coalition Military Assistance Training Teams issue enlisted IA troops the M-16A4, while officers

receive the M-4. With 200 basic training recruits per rotation, CMATT officials estimate that 1600 IA soldiers will receive the new weapons by the end of May.

According to Lt. Col. Walter Easter, Military Transition Team commander and senior advisor to the RTC, the exchange is as much a symbol of the new IA as it is an upgrade to the individual soldier's capabilities.

"The M-16 has long been considered the world's best rifle," Easter said. "There's a high percentage of [Iraqi Army recruits] who can shoot more accurately than we expected just because of the better weapon

system that they have."

The weapon exchange is just the first step in a five-day program of instruction for the Iraqis. However, new rifles are not handed out in a one-for-one swap. Coalition Forces assign each IA recruit a weapon using a high-tech, biometric issue system.

Verified against a master list and having tuned in his old rifle, the IA soldier and his new M-16 continue on to one of ten biometric stations, where he is finger printed, undergoes a digital retinal scan and is photographed with the M16's serial number.

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Soldiers of Iraq get locked, loaded with U.S. rifles

Rifles

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Officials then transfer the information to a database in Baghdad, to ensure accountability and to prevent the weapon from ending up in the wrong hands.

"We are very excited about it," said a 9th Iraqi Army Division second lieutenant, whose name is withheld to protect his identity. "We have been hearing about getting the new weapons for some time and finally they are here."

U.S. Department of Defense civilian contractors provide hands-on instruction modeled after the same training American troops receive. Familiar box drills, sight picture training and live-fire weapon zeroing provide consistent and effective basic marksmanship skills.

It does a number of things for the basic IA soldier, said George Conrad, an assistant team leader provid-



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Conner, 15th SB, PAO)

Iraqi Army recruits looks through the sights of their new M-16A4 during box drill training at the Taji RTC rifle range. The training helps recruits attain the proper sight picture through the unfamiliar rear sight aperture and front sight post of the M-16.

ing the primary marksman-ship instruction.

The better weapon system puts the IA forces in sync with coalition troops and it builds their confidence.

Conrad said they have all

seen change and new equipment at the higher echelons, but now, the soldier in the dirt has something new, something tangible, in his hands.

"It's a sign of hope that things are changing," he

said.

Easter said that training at the Taji RTC would continue at the company-size level, with program augmentation at Besimaya Range later this summer for IA battalions.

Arabic Phrase of the Day

dihin

Defined:
oil

Iraq 3-Day Weather Report



Today

High: 100
Low: 78



Tomorrow

High: 103
Low: 78



Sunday

High: 103
Low: 78

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Soldiers create brotherhood in Iraq

By Pfc. Ben Fox
3-1 Cav. Public Affairs

KHAN BANI SA'AD, Iraq - Gathered around a makeshift table made from a sheet of plywood resting on Meals Ready-To-Eat boxes, Soldiers at Khan Bani Sa'ad played a game of cards in the middle of their compound.

These Soldiers talked, joked and fought the entire game as if they all had known each other their whole lives. The truth is, many of these men have known each other for just over a year, some even less.

Yet, at this compound run by the 1-12 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, the men have bonded in the same way a family would after years of living together.

"I would put my life on the line for everybody out here," said Spc. Miguel Luzunaris, or "LZ" as his friends call him.

"It's more of a brotherhood than anything out here," said Spc. Jeffrey Marder. "We are with each other 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

"When you're out there and you have to



(Photo by Pfc. Ben Fox, 3-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

Pfc. Matthew Taylor, 1-12 Combined Arms Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, moves with his platoon to an Iraqi Police station in Judidah, Iraq.

trust your life to your friends, it brings you a little bit closer," said Pfc. Matthew Taylor, the platoon's combat medic.

"Infantry, we are in the fight a little deeper than anybody else," said Luzunaris. "You have to trust the man behind you, and you have to trust the man in front of you.

"I think we are a lot closer because we go through a lot of stuff together," he said.

Not only do the Soldiers come closer together through combat experiences, but personal experiences also increase the bond they share.

"We all have family... back at home," said Luzunaris. "We are all trying to get back to them.

"It's the support, I know you have your family and I have mine so let's help each other make it back to them," said Luzunaris. "We all just gather up... and take care of each other."

Many of the Soldiers feel like they are just as close to each other as they are to their families back home.

"I treat them like I do my brothers," said Taylor. "I have two younger brothers and a younger sister.

"They are as much family as my own family," he said. "If they need something, I'm there for them and they are there for me."

"You get to know everybody around you," said Marder. "You get to know their lifestyle and their home life, even their personal life.

"I know the same amount about my brother as I do these guys," he said.

The men also get into brotherly fights.

"Griff and I as roommates...every day we are messing with each other," said Luzunaris.

"If he isn't messing with me, I'm going to pick a fight with him," he added.

"It doesn't feel right if we don't bicker with each other at least once a day," said Luzunaris. "If I can fight with you and five minutes later we are back laughing, that's when you really know that is a real friend right there."

These Soldiers are also willing to put their lives on the line for each other.

"Even if I don't get along with one of them, if we are in a firefight out there... they are going to protect you," he said.

Baghdad in Brief



(Photo by Sgt. Nathan Miller, 1-325th Abn. Inf. Regt.)

A cache of materials used to make explosively-formed projectile improvised explosive devices in the Kadamiyah neighborhood in northwestern Baghdad is displayed May 15.

Coalition Forces discover two EFP cache sites

BAGHDAD - Coalition Forces found two explosively-formed projectile improvised explosive device cache sites in the Kadamiyah neighborhood in northwestern Baghdad May 15.

Soldiers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 325th Air Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, found one cache site which had a completely assembled EFP, a Dragonov rifle with scope and a Kevlar helmet. While investigating the site, a tip from an Iraqi citizen led the Coalition Forces to a second cache site.

At the second site, Soldiers discovered nine copper plates with tubes, a key component of the EFP, with rolls of wire, cells phones and other miscellaneous improvised explosive device-making materials.

Also at the second location were 150 rocket-propelled grenade propellants, several homemade explosives, three anti-tank mines, two flash initiators, an anti-personnel mine, a sub-machine gun, rifle scope and a gas mask.

Black Jack's best box at Union III smoker

By Spc. Alexis Harrison
2-1 Cav. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE UNION III, Iraq - For several nights, members of the 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team and attached units punched it out to see who would come out victorious in the first-ever Black Jack Boxing Smoker.

Days and weeks of training and toughness turned out to be the main factors in the championship fight night May 14. Aside from the grudge matches that pitted friend upon friend or friendly rivals against one another, the championship night showcased the best of the best in the brigade.

The championship night proved to be one of the largest and loudest turn outs they had so far, said 1st Lt. Garret Holt, the battalion adjutant with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 3rd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment.

In the featherweight class, Spc. David Flores from 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment beat Sgt. Raymond Robinson, also of 5-20th Inf.

In the lightweight class, Sgt. David Murray from 4th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment beat Spc. Timothy Dunbar.

In the welterweight class, Spc. Chris Thomas was uncontested in the final bout because Capt. John Verdugo, 4-9th Cavalry's chaplain, went on leave the day of the fight.

Spc. Joseph Riqueros from 3-82nd Field Artillery defeated Spc. Josh Hentbrook in three rounds for the middleweight crown.

Spc. Armondo Montemayor of 3-82nd FA, pummeled Spc. Sebastian Hentbrook into submission before the final bell rung to claim the light-heavyweight title.

In the mid-heavyweight division, Spc. Jerrick Cruz from 5-20th Inf. and Spc. Jason Taylor from the 15th Brigade Support Battalion lit up the crowd in a match that went all the way, with Cruz coming out on top.

Spc. Lance Taffa from Company C, 5-20th Inf., defeated Spc. Terrian Regester for the heavyweight crown.

In the super-heavyweight final, Pfc. Randall Dane from 3-82nd FA edged Sgt. Shea Hawkins of 5-20th Inf. for the title after three rounds.

In the women's lightweight division,



(Photo by Spc. Alexis Harrison, 2-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

Spc. Jerrick Cruz from 5th Bn., 20th Inf. Regt., part of Task Force 1-14 attached to the 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div., lands a left on Spc. Jason Taylor from the 15th Support Bn., during their championship bout in the Black Jack boxing smoker on Forward Operating Base Union III May 14.

Spc. Paula Cossio of the 15th BSB and Sgt. Natasha Johnson had the crowd pumped up for their match that went the distance with Cossio coming out on top.

In the women's middleweight division, Spc. Kate Galloway from 4-9th Cavalry defeated Staff Sgt. Elizabeth Sanchez of the 15th BSB for the title.

Spc. Timothy Dunbar, with help from several other Soldiers, helped construct the ring. He was not only one of the organizers of the event; he fought in the championship bout for the lightweight class.

He admitted to giving it his all, but came away with a strong second-place finish. He said he didn't train or prepare for the fight. He said that after experiencing the fight firsthand, he wants to come back next time to better organize the event and make it even more exciting for the spectators and fighters.

"Next time, we hope to have an even bigger show," Dunbar said. "It opened the door for a lot more contestants. They saw the competition level and I think it showed them that they can compete in it. I think we'll have a lot more people sign up next time."

With another boxing smoker slated for

some time in October, Holt said that many Soldiers are getting prepared already.

"Just after the first few nights, people started to have technique and more focus because of the competition," Holt said. "People were coming up to me saying 'Sir, I'm going to start training right now.'"

"It's not a typical Friday or Saturday night for me," Holt said. "You feel like you get out of Iraq for a moment. It's nice because it's not like a movie night where you're watching some bootleg movie sitting around with your friends."

Along with the championships were the grudge matches. These didn't hold any weight as far as the actual tournament or standings, but they served as a channel for two people to go head-to-head to punch out a friendly rivalry or as one person remarked: 'just beat the snot out of each other.'

After all the fighting was done, the brigade commander, Col Bryan Roberts, and Command Sgt. Maj. Lames Lee were joined by several battalion commanders and sergeants major to deliver certificates to everyone who fought. Those who made it to the final round were awarded medals.